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TAGS: KSCA KGHG SENV TSPL TBIO TSPA ENRG ECON SOCI IN
SUBJECT: NEW DELHI EST OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 14 TO SEPTEMBER 18, 2009.

¶1. Below is a compilation of Environment, Science, and Technology highlights from Embassy New Delhi for the week of September 14 to September 18, 2009, including the following:

-- India Plans to Reduce Emissions through Legislation
-- India Starts to Get Serious About Environmental Protection
-- Lower Temperature Gradient Between Indian Landmass and Neighboring Ocean Impacts Monsoon
-- Nineteen New Species Discovered in Sikkim
-- ISRO to Launch Oceansat-2 and Six Nanosats on September 23
-- National Unique Identification Program Creates Excitement in the Information, Communication and Technology Industry

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ENVIRONMENT
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India Plans to Reduce Emissions through Legislation

¶2. According to an interview given by MoEF Minister Jairam Ramesh, the GOI plans to enact legislation to limit GHG emissions and carry forward mitigation steps in five key sectors including: power, infrastructure related industries such as steel and cement, transportation, agriculture, and forestry. Minister Ramesh has said that the steps would include mandatory fuel efficiency standards, a requirement that all public buildings be energy conservation code compliant by 2012, enhanced use of clean coal technology and renewable energy sources, and an emissions reduction target for ¶2030. These initiatives are clearly geared towards demonstrating at Copenhagen that India is proactive on the climate change front. Whether the legislation passes, or is even introduced, remains to be seen and implementation of such initiatives will be difficult at best.

¶3. Ramesh previewed these initiatives in a September 11 joint appearance with Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen at an event hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). He emphasized that India would take these steps on a national basis and, deflecting the Danish appeal for cooperation at Copenhagen, insisted India would not make legally-binding emissions pledges. Asked by a reporter what India would seek from the international community in return for implementing these mitigation steps, Ramesh declared there are "no preconditions" and stated India would take these actions because they are in India's interest. A senior member of the Danish delegation told EmbOff that, Ramesh's hard public line on COP-15 notwithstanding, private discussions with PM Singh and Ramesh had been "reasonably encouraging."

India Starts to Get Serious About Environmental Protection

¶4. Following up on his declaration to create an Indian Environmental Protection Agency modeled somewhat on the U.S. EPA, Minister of Environment and Forests Jairam Rameshhas released a discussion paper for public comment laying out four potential options for strengthening environmental protection in India. The options include: (1) creation of a National Environment Monitoring Authority focused on compliance and enforcement which works with the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB); (2) creation of a full-fledged National Environment Protection Authority (NEPA) with powers similar to the U.S. EPA whereby the CPCB will be dissolved and subsumed into the NEPA; (3) creation of a NEPA where the CPCB remains an independent body answering to MoEF; and (4) creation of a NEPA to which the CPCB must answer.



¶5. The four options appear to be overlapping and needlessly complex but were laid out in such a fashion to promote transparency and inclusiveness in the discussion. There are also political consequences to dissolving the CPCB although we suspect that is Ramesh's preferred method considering he has indicated a preference for Option 2 and the paper supports the creation of a strong NEPA devoted to the polluter pays and precautionary principles. The paper itself is refreshingly frank and includes statements critical of past government efforts such as "quite clearly, while our environmental laws have been progressive, implementation by government agencies has left much to be desired." The paper also cites in a positive light a study by an NGO, the Centre for Science and Environment, that has been viciously critical of MoEF in the past. The paper appears to be Ramesh's first broadside in the battle between development and environmental protection and is a welcome change in the hitherto moribund MoEF.

Lower Temperature Gradient Between Indian Landmass and Neighboring Ocean Impacts Monsoon

¶6. A recent study by Dr. Bawiskar of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology Pune, suggests that a fall in the temperature gradient between the Indian landmass and the surrounding ocean may be one of the key reasons for the reduced number of tropical depressions and cyclonic storms impacting India as well as the increased number of no rain days during the Southwest monsoon and a corresponding decrease in rainfall. The study is titled "Weakening of lower tropospheric temperature gradient between Indian landmass and neighboring oceans and its impact on Indian monsoon" and was published in the August 2009 Journal of Earth System Science. The study tracked the change in the temperature gradient over 60 years from 1948 to 2007 and observed that the pre-monsoon gradient has been falling at the rate of 0.036 percent per year in the Arabian Sea and 0.030 percent per year in the Bay of Bengal. Dr. Bawiskar told ESTFSN that he did not have conclusive evidence as to why the sea temperature rose faster than the land mass but suspected it was due to increased global warming. He also expressed a serious concern over instances where the measured temperature gradient was nearly zero. He further added this was the first study to establish a correlation between the temperature gradient and rainfall.

Nineteen New Species Discovered in Sikkim

¶7. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) recently released a report titled "Eastern Himalayas: Where Worlds Collide" which highlights the discovery of over 353 new species of flora and fauna found in the Eastern Himalaya region between 1998 and 2008. Discoveries include 242 plants, 16 amphibians, 16 reptiles, 14 fish, two birds, two mammals, and over 61 invertebrates. Of these, 19 new species - three fish and 16 plants - were discovered in Sikkim state. WWF reported that Sikkim, which is one of the most biologically diverse areas on the planet, is threatened by population pressure, unplanned infrastructure growth, illegal logging, hydropower projects, and demand for forest commodities in both global and regional markets.

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
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ISRO to Launch Oceansat-2 and Six Nanosats on September 23

¶8. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) plans to launch the 960-kg Oceansat-2 and six nanosatellites, including two 8 kg satellites and four 1 Kg cubesats, on September 23, 2009 using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle. Oceansat-2 is designed to replace



the ageing Oceansat-1 launched in 1999 and will allow scientists to continue the study of ocean-atmosphere interaction, ocean winds, and sea surface temperature. The satellite is also expected to be used for identifying schools of fish, predicting the state of the sea, monitoring phytoplankton blooms, and studying suspended sediments in water. The two 8 kg satellites are from Luxembourg and Germany while the four Cubesats are from the Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne in Switzerland, the Technical University of Berlin, the University of Wurzburg, and the Istanbul Technical University. All of the six nanosatellites are designed to test nanosatellite capabilities.

National Unique Identification Program Creates Excitement in the Information, Communication and Technology Industry

¶9. The GOI's establishment of the Unique Identification Authority of India, headed by former Chairman of Infosys, Nandan Nilekani and designed to provide every Indian with a unique identification card (UID), has created a lot of interest in the semiconductor and Information and Communication Technology industry. This was reflected in the recent eSecurity, Smart card and Radio Frequency Identification Expo held in Delhi September 10 to 12. Over 100 companies participated in the Expo including Texas Instruments, NXP, ST Microelectronics, Infineon, Sagem, Base Systems, Bartronics, Lipi Data Systems Ltd, HiTi Digital, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Wipro, Hindustan Computers Limited (HCL), and National Informatics Centre (NIC). Notably absent from the conference were the UID governmental authorities. Representatives of companies including TCS, NXP and Infineon told ESTFSN that the specifications for the UID smartcard project, including memory size, level of encryption and access, and which biodata indicators would be utilized, were still under discussion.

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